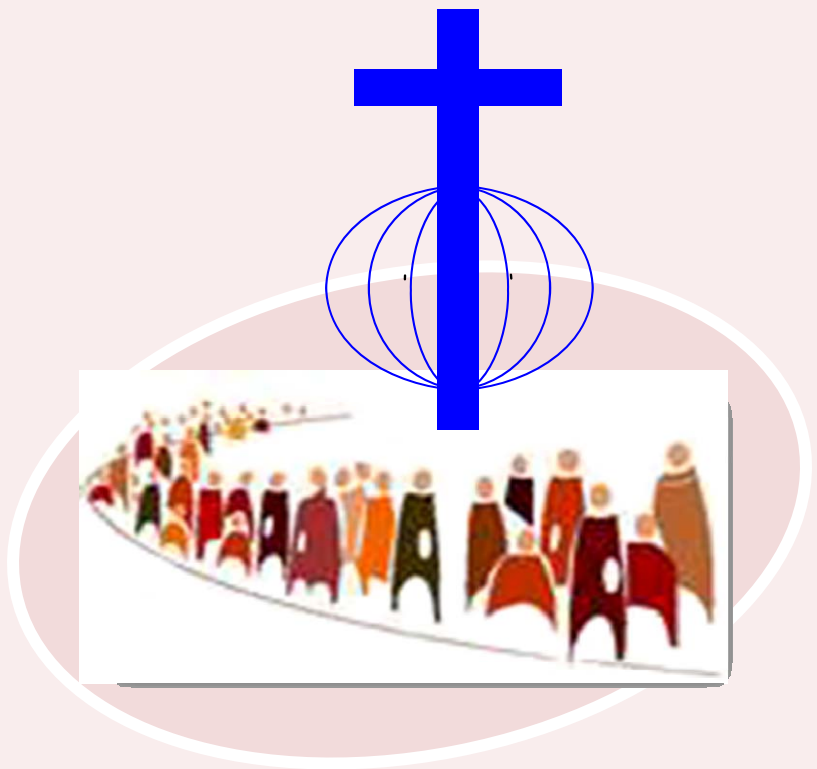


The Present Moment

Volume 11

January 2010

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*To create peace
And fraternity,
We shall go into the world.
As instruments of Christ,
We shall live with him
As we search for the will of God.*

*Robert Lebel
(From the theme song of the
Institute's 50th anniversary)*

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FROM THE EDITORS ...



by *Raymonde Jetté and Fernand Turgeon*

Dear Readers,

We are already in 2010. Our Institute continues to grow. Our experience on the central council since 2004 has allowed us to open new vistas on the world. It is so wonderful to see our spirituality of the 5-5-5 spreading across America to Europe and Asia, and it is a bit of this wonder that we would like to share with you.

During 2009 we were affected by the death of our Founder, Father Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I. As a tribute to him we published a special edition of this journal in January, 2010, and it is joined with this edition. Father would have been 100 years old on July 12, 2010. We must all pray for him who prayed so much for all of us.

The theme of our Ninth Assembly General is: *Consecrated Secularity*. The chapter will be held in Québec (Canada) June 6 to 19, 2010. The Assembly is a reflection of our Institute's reality. We are all called to take part in this gathering, some as delegates and the others through their prayer.

In this issue of our journal we also have news from the districts and regions, as well as testimonies from *Voluntas Dei* members from different countries. We gratefully thank the directors who send us news of their district or region or who write about their daily life. *The Present Moment* is meant to be a place for sharing the experience of the members of the Institute.

May our Assembly General be a bearer of peace and hope.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *The Present Moment*.

The Present Moment

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Layout: *Anne Penelle*
Translation: *Léo Grégoire and Guillermo Pérez*

FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL...



by François Hamel

It is with faith that we begin the new year – as we have done all along. However, this year is special in that the Institute will be holding its ninth assembly general, and that Father Parent will likely be celebrating his 100th birthday. Consultation of the membership on the assembly general has highlighted the aspect of consecrated secularity. We live in the midst of the world, and it is in our secularity that we live as consecrated people. It is our task to develop in us the spirituality of the 5-5-5 which Father Parent has given us. I have often heard him say that the spirituality of the 5-5-5 comes from the Holy Spirit, and that he was nothing more than “God’s postman.”

Every spirituality is an experience of the acting and transforming presence of the Spirit. Of this I have had the opportunity to experience personally. The spiritual experience change our human potential not only by personal inner transformation, but also by inviting us to transform the world that is ours. I, of course, am not the only one to have had this experience... The spirituality of the 5-5-5 leads me to a new level of relationship with God and with the men and women on my path. I would even say that it even establishes a new relationship with things and events. I want to thank all those I have met and who have helped me grow in my faith and in the spirituality of the 5-5-5. And here I want to mention in a special way Bishop Louis Marie Ling Mangkanekhoun and the members of Sri Lanka, for their commitment to being peacemakers. Yes, you have touched me in a positive way.

Every time before leaving to visit the members of the Institute I had to exercise detachment – leaving behind my family, my friends, my Canadian comfort and well-being, in order to embark on an adventure elsewhere. Abraham’s experience has often come to my mind and has often urged me on. Every journey began in the chapel of the central house, and ended there as well.

I wanted my charge as director general to be one of service. First, there is the service of memory. Our Institute is still young: we celebrated our golden anniversary in 2008. Father Parent and several of his first companions are still with us. I hope that the Canadians and the Americans realize the chance they have had to have met and lived with our Founder. The members of the Institute living outside North America have so often told me how lucky I was to be able to see Father Parent. I thank the Lord for this, because every time I have met the man I have been blessed with his words of wisdom... and this, despite his old age and fragility. It was with him that I learned the presence of God.

Then there is the service of communion. Our young Institute is growing, and we have had new foundations, like Ethiopia. In each of my visits, I have spoken on our spirituality, but I have also given news of the other members. It is always interesting to see how consecrated secularity is experienced in different cultures. This has helped me – I hope – to broaden our understanding: secularity in India is different from that in Chile, but consecration remains the same. It is simply lived differently.

Finally, I have wanted to be of service to the mission. As a secular institute, we have a mission in both the Church and the world. The Holy Father Benedict XVI reminded us of this in his address on the occasion of the

60th anniversary of *Provida Mater Ecclesia* which officially created secular institutes in 1947: “Know that you are challenged by every pain and every injustice, as well as by every search for truth, beauty and kindness, not because you have the solutions to all the problems, but because every circumstance in which man lives and dies is for you an opportunity to witness to the saving work of God. This is your mission.”

We have no common task or work. What unites us is our spirituality. Every member resides in the secular milieu that is his. However, we are not alone. Team life draws us together and sustains us.

If faith helps me interpret my reality in relation to God who is Love, the spirituality of the 5-5-5 gives a certain colouration to my words and actions. Finally, beyond all appearances, there is also work that is discrete and quiet, work that is done in the office, at home, in planes and in rooms all over the world.

“The quiet inner work that accompanies faithfulness to one’s task, and which is, at times, marked by solitude and the misunderstanding of those to whom we give of ourself, becomes a path to personal holiness and mediation of salvation...” (CIVCSVA, *Le service de l’autorité et l’obéissance*, no. 28, 11 mai 2008).

It has been my pleasure to serve the Institute as director general. It was an experience for me of faith and of deepening the spirituality of the 5-5-5. I thank you for your confidence and for having supported me with your friendship and your prayers. The love story begin in 1978 when I first became acquainted with the Institute continues now in a different way.



Visit to Sri Lanka, February 2009

From left to right:

**Mr. Joseph George Edward Pieris (Associate Member),
Fr. Ollattupurath Thomman Kutty Thomson (Professed Member)
Fr. François Hamel, D.G.
and Fr. Selvaratnam James Dunstan
(Director of the Sri Lanka District-in-formation)**

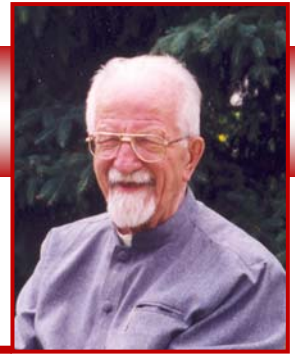


At the central house, Trois-Rivières, in July 2009.

From left to right:

**Fr. Selvaratnam James Dunstan, (Councillor)
Fr. Jean-Paul Chiasson (Assistant Director General)
Alfredo Sioleti of Italy
and Fr. François Hamel (Director General)**

FROM THE PEN OF FATHER PARENT...



Suggestions for Today

by *Louis-Marie Parent, o.m.i.*

Lord, each morning you wait for me with special graces for the day.

Today, I want to love you, to worship you, to serve you. You arouse within me your Spirit who gives me the tenderness to love, the courage to bring peace and to carry it with me, the good humour to sow joy.

Today, you shower me with an abundance of kindness, goodness, and gentleness. Kindness is the face of your Divine Spirit who, through me, wants to reach everyone who has been placed on my path today.

Goodness is the climate that you ask of me so that my neighbours will not feel threatened by my behaviour; so that they will be drawn to you to find security and to be at ease.

Gentleness is a permanent quality of the heart that is ready to accept its neighbour unconditionally.

Thank you for awakening me to these realities of your Spirit in me.

Lord, to react properly to what you give me to do, grant me today your patience that knows how to wait, because it is filled with love; your fidelity which is the love that dwells in you and with you; and your own self-control, because your divinity keeps you in perfect balance.

Lord, thank you for having prepared me so well to begin this wonderful day in serenity and unity. Amen.

(1) Adapted from Louis-Marie Parent, *The Present Moment*, Collection Volontaire de Dieu, 1990, p. 199.

We must give our spirituality to others to help them live from it. We must be its propagandists just like Saint Paul who did not keep the Gospel for himself but passed it on and became its great defender.

Fr. Louis-Marie Parent, O.M.I.

Ordination Anniversaries 2010



Fr. Gerard James Steffener, United States

50 years

Fr. Jomanas Eustache, Haiti

25 years

PRAYER FOR ASSEMBLY GENERAL...

*Gracious and glorious God, Holy Trinity,
Out of the depths of your love
You have called us to deepen our baptismal union
Through our vows and commitments of
obedience, poverty and chastity
According to the Constitution of the secular Institute, Voluntas Dei.*

*You have inserted us in the midst
of everyday life that we may be your heralds.
In a world that cherishes
Lack of commitment,
May we witness to the true liberation of obedience
and fidelity to the Will of God through our Institute.*



*In a time when so many seek fulfillment through
superficial power, pleasure and possessions,
may our lives of poverty and chastity speak of a deeper truth.*

*By the prayers of Mary Immaculate,
May our Assembly of 2010 inspire us to thrill in
the unique vocation and witness that is ours.
As we explore more deeply the meaning of consecrated secularity
And the spirituality of the 3-5's,
May the Holy Spirit guide us to greater freedom
as the sons and daughters of God. Amen.*

THE ASSEMBLY GENERAL - A CELEBRATION OF OUR HERITAGE

by François Hamel



The members of our Institute are preparing to celebrate an assembly general, in June of 2010. In referring to our Constitutions, we note that “*De jure*, the Assembly General meets every six (6) years for the election of the Director General and Councilors, and to deal with the Institute’s most pressing matters.” (art. 137)

Although an assembly such as this is a serious affair, a gathering of people of every category, but with a common quest for holiness through the spirituality of the 5-5-5, this event must also be experienced as a celebration.

First, there is the celebration of God gathering us together. It is around him and under the guidance of the Spirit that we come from the Americas, from Asia and perhaps from Europe. We represent the entire Institute in our common identity of consecrated persons, along with our differences in living our secularity. Together we are consecrated secular persons, and we must integrate our differences as we remain peacemakers. Every day is lived around the Eucharist, and is divided by the Liturgy of the Hours. On the night before the elections, we even have an evening of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Elections will be held, during the Assembly General. Our duty shall be to give the Institute a director general and councillors who will guide the Institute for the next six years. I remember my election, in 1998. The Founder of the Institute was a member of the Assembly. After the election itself, all the delegates gathered in the chapel. Yvon

Carpentier, the outgoing director general, gave me a copy of the Constitutions, then I asked Father Parent to give me his blessing. He asked all present to stretch their hands in my direction, and he blessed me. Then he said: “Now that we have blessed François, we cannot damn him and grumble!” I hope that this ritual continue. There was, in our Founder’s action, an invitation for us to avoid criticism and complaining.

But there is more. In 2010 we shall study the theme of consecrated secularity, along with several sub-themes. We must remember, though, that in so doing we must celebrate the spirituality that governs our lives. The mission of an assembly general is to protect the heritage of the Institute (canon 631 § 1). Our heritage or patrimony is comprised of the intentions of the founder, the spirituality, history, the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the institute, and of its sound traditions (canon 578).

To celebrate our heritage means to focus ourselves more acutely on what form our common identity.

Some *de facto* and some elected delegates take part directly in the deliberations of the assembly general. However, everyone has been involved in the preparation of the working paper, and everyone, too, and in his/her own milieu, is involved through daily prayer for the assembly’s success. Every member of the Institute is called to be a being of service.

The assembly general is a celebration,
So... let’s celebrate!

DELEGATES THE ASSEMBLY GENERAL ...

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Canada | Andrew P. Mayer Marc-André Lafrenière Michel Laroche Jean-Guy Brillon (Associate Member) |
| Central | Alfredo Sioletic |
| Colombia | Alonso Posada Echeverry |
| United States | John O'Neill Julian Gonzalez |
| Haiti | Bernard Némorin Pierre-Maxis Paul |
| India | Innasi Mudiyanpan Johnny Puthenveetil Joseph Sengol Rex Lourduraj (Associate Member) |
| Dominican Republic | Andrés Solano Sosa Dionisio Reyes Berroa Ramón De la Cruz (Associate Member) Ramón Aridio Cueto Mejía (Associate Member) |
| Sri Lanka | Sebastiampillai Anton Mariathas Anne Joycy (Associate Member) |

Wedding Anniversaries

Canada
Jean-Guy Brillon
and Doreen Connelly

50

Chile
Rogelio Antonio Pando Urbina
and Maria Lucrecia Garate Rojas

Dominican Republic
Benigno Mercedes
and Juana Cabrera

Juan Bautista Polanco
and Maria Fortunada Paulino



Canada
Norbert Thibert
and Lorraine Fleury

India
Varghese Genardhanan
and Vimala Thankayyan
Antony Kalappurakkal Joseph
and Baby Antony

Jose Ashokan
and Celine Ashokan

Dominican Republic
Felix Maria Diaz
and Luz Emilia Reyes
Rafael Reyes Santana
and Eneroliza Contreras Jimenez

Sri Lanka
Joseph Sebamalai Marianayagam
and Rajaprema Mariyanayagam

25

COUNCILS...

| Councils | | Members | | Term of Office | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------------|-------------|
| | Number of Mandates | Members | Position | Beginning | End of Term |
| Central | 2 | HAMEL, François | D.G. | 04-08-01 | 10-08-01 |
| | 1 | CHIASSON, Jean-Paul | A.D.G. | 04-08-01 | |
| | 1 | CORNEJO GARATE, Manuel | C.G. | 04-08-01 | |
| | 0 | MAROIS, Pierre | C.G. | 09-05-01 | |
| | 1 | DUNSTAN, Selvaratnam James | C.G. | 04-08-01 | |
| | 2 | GRÉGOIRE, Léo | C.G. | 04-08-01 | |
| | 1 | JETTÉ-TURGEON, Raymonde | C.G. | 04-08-01 | |
| | 0 | SIOLETI, Andrew | C.G. | 08-07-21 | |
| | 1 | TURGEON, Fernand | C.G. | 04-08-01 | |
| Canadian District | 2 | CÔTÉ, André | D.D. | 07-05-21 | 11-05-21 |
| | 2 | LEBEL, Robert | A.D.D. | 07-05-21 | |
| | 0 | MAYER, Andrew P. | D.C. | 09-07-30 | |
| | 1 | MICHAUD, Gérald | D.C. | 07-05-21 | |
| | 1 | THÉBERGE, Jacques | D.C. | 07-05-21 | |
| | 2 | LEBRUN, Jean | D.C. | 07-05-21 | |
| | 2 | PERRIER-LEBRUN, Marcelle | D.C. | 07-05-21 | |
| Dom. Rep. District | 1 | ARAUJO TEJADA, Ramón Antonio | D.D. | 07-08-01 | 11-08-01 |
| | 2 | PAYANO SANTANA, Jacobo | D.C. | 07-08-01 | |
| | 1 | SÁNCHEZ-BURGOS, Vicente | D.C. | 07-08-01 | |
| | 2 | ZORILLA RAMIREZ, Pablo Daniel | D.C. | 07-08-01 | |
| | 1 | CUETO MEJIA, Ramon Aridio | D.C. | 07-08-01 | |
| | 1 | CAPELLAN CAMACHO, Margarita Maria | D.C. | 07-08-01 | |
| Haiti District | 1 | DÉSIRÉ, Philippe | D.D. | 07-05-01 | 11-05-01 |
| | 1 | JÉRÔME, Salomon | A.D.D. | 07-05-01 | |
| | 1 | MONESTIME, Evynx | D.C. | 07-05-01 | |
| | 1 | HORACE, Didi | D.C. | 07-05-01 | |
| | 1 | NÉMORIN, Bernard | D.C. | 07-05-01 | |

| Councils | | Members | | Term of Office | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|----------|----------------|-------------|
| | Number of Mandates | Members | Position | Beginning | End of Term |
| Chile Region | 2 | CORNEJO GARATE, Manuel | R.D. | 07-01-01 | 11-01-01 |
| | 1 | GUERRA ROMERO, Marcos Alejandro | A.R.D. | 07-01-01 | |
| | 1 | BERNAL ARANCIBIA, Henry Omar | R.C. | 07-01-01 | |
| | 1 | LEIVA MUÑOZ, Richards Eduardo | R.C. | 07-01-01 | |
| | 1 | GONZALEZ MENAY, Catalina Rosa | R.C. | 07-01-01 | |
| Colombia Region | 2 | POSADA ECHEVERY, Alonso De Jesús | R.D. | 07-01-01 | 11-01-01 |
| | 2 | PEREZ MONTOYA, Guillermo | A.R.D. | 07-01-01 | |
| | 0 | GUZMAN ROA, Maximiliano | R.C. | 09-11-02 | |
| | 0 | FRANCO CORREA, Alicia | R.C. | 09-11-02 | |
| India Distr. in Form. | 1 | GOMEZ, Napoleon | D.D. | 09-03-01 | 13-03-01 |
| | 1 | INNASI, Mudiappan | A.D.D. | 09-03-01 | |
| | 1 | SENGOL, Joseph | D.C. | 09-03-01 | |
| | 1 | PUTHENVEETIL, Jony D. | D.C. | 09-03-01 | |
| | 1 | LOURDURAJ, Rex | D.C. | 09-03-01 | |
| | 1 | JEYA, Maria Poorana | D.C. | 09-03-01 | |
| Sri Lanka Distr. in Form. | 1 | DUNSTAN, Selvaratnam James | D.D. | 06-11-01 | 10-11-01 |
| | 1 | SAHAYANATHAN, Anthony | A.D.D. | 06-11-01 | |
| | 1 | MARIATHAS, Sebastiampillai Anton | D.C. | 06-11-01 | |
| | 1 | NAVARATNAM, Joseph | D.C. | 06-11-01 | |
| | 1 | JOYCY, Anne | D.C. | 06-11-01 | |
| United States Distr. in Form. | 2 | HAZLER, George | D.D. | 06-11-01 | 10-11-01 |
| | 1 | SIOLETI, Andrew | A.D.D. | 06-11-01 | |
| | 1 | O'NEILL, John | D.C. | 06-11-01 | |
| | 1 | BASILE, Domenic | D.C. | 06-11-01 | |
| | 1 | ANTONUCCI-BASILE, Elaine | D.C. | 06-11-01 | |

| | |
|------|---------------------|
| D.G. | Director General |
| D.D. | District Director |
| R.D. | Regional Director |
| A. | Assistant |
| C.G. | Councillor General |
| D.C. | District Councillor |
| R.C. | Regional Councillor |



The Central Council, 2009-2010

Canada

The Canadian director welcomed Father Guillaume Malibu, a Voluntas Dei priest from the Congo, in February, 2009.

Since March, 2009, Father Guillaume has been doing ministry in the diocese of Saint Boniface (Manitoba) and belongs to the Saint Boniface Voluntas Dei team.

In August, 2009, the Canadian District accepted two new couples to aspirancy, a couple and a single layman to probation, two couples to first commitments, and a single layman to first profession. A single layman received his stability.

In the sector reports submitted to the Canadian District, we get the following information:

- The district study guides are well made and it is worth our developing more. Their content allows us to assimilate the subjects treated and to nourish our daily lives. In 2008-2009, the guides were titled *The Team and Spirituality*.
- The team is a special tool for personal and spiritual development.
- We hope to ensure sufficient openness to those interested in our Institute so that they have a better knowledge of what consecrated secularity is all about.
- Each year the Canadian District distributes to its members a calendar with each one's anniversary date (birth, ordination, wedding...) This helps consolidate the ties of fraternity and friendship.

The funeral of Father Parent, our Founder, was celebrated in the basilica of Notre-Dame-du-Cap May 22, 2009. Most of the district membership participated in this celebration.

In March and May 2009 an annual retreat was offered to the members. The July Congress's theme was *Building Peace and Brotherhood in Jesus Christ*.

The last district assembly had two priorities; "The reality of aging," and "Expansion and Continuation." Follow-up was a bit late in order to allow the members to answer the preparatory questionnaire to the 2010 Assembly General. In October and November 2009, the Canadian District director met the members of sectors. Following these meetings, each sector will reach a consensus on a topic of interest and propose a delegate to take part in a round-table discussion.

NEWS FROM DISTRICTS AND REGIONS... (CONTINUED)

Chile

Excerpts from the Annual Report

Our last national gathering was held in Santiago in March of 2009, with a majority of the membership attending with the gladness and enthusiasm that are proper to our Institute. We live in an open and welcoming Church that has opted for the life of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our gathering focussed on the call to be "Jesus Christ's missionary disciples."

Members received the questionnaire to prepare the Assembly General. This questionnaire raises the question about our consecrated secularity. The call to consecrated secularity is present in the role that each one of us plays in his milieu and work place. The questionnaire stimulates our desire for good training so as to better respond to the challenges of the world today.

We note here the death of our Founder on May 17, 2009. Father Louis-Marie Parent undeniably affected the life of each one of us here in Chile with the spirituality he gave us. We share the sadness of all the members of the Institute throughout the world. However, we are most confident that Fr. Parent is in the Father's house and in the arms of Mary, the one he loved so much.

Formation

- Promote study of the formation guides according to the stage of each member, including the new guides for associate members.
- Produce resources for couples and single laymen, in collaboration with other members.

- Team study of the advantages and inconveniences of being a district in formation.
- Strengthen the feeling of belonging to the Institute through the contribution of each member for the development of the Institute in the region.

House of Formation

The development of this project created last year is ongoing. It is reaching top speed in the formation of future *Voluntas Dei* priests of the region. Fathers Manuel Cornejo Gárate and Marcos Guerra Romero give a systematic formation as they promote an atmosphere of fraternity and responsibility which help the seminarians acquire our spirituality.

For financial reasons we have had to abandon the weekend vocation meetings. On the other hand, we have chosen to maintain contact with the young people and others interested in the Institute by inviting them to weekend experiences with our seminarians, at the house of formation. This is a good occasion to fellowship and to share with them our spirituality. We continue with both postal and electronic communication with those interested.

At the October, 2009 meeting the central council accepted the request made by the Chile director that our region be raised to the status of a district in formation. Congratulations!

NEWS FROM DISTRICTS AND REGIONS... (CONTINUED)

Colombia

Excerpts from the Annual Report and from the Noti-Voluntas Dei

The political, social and economic situation is very precarious because of several conflicting factors that have sadly been existing, these past 40 years and more. These conflicts keep the country at war within the country, and now hold thousands of citizens in extreme poverty. Besides, the massive displacement of the population towards the cities increases day by day. 11 million Colombians are without revenue, or survive with less than one dollar a day.

Relations with the Bishops

Relations with the bishops of Medellin, Armenia and Tumaco are excellent. Our seminarians are very welcome and sought out.

Ongoing Formation of Members

We stress the question of formation every year. We pursue our study of Church documents and of the formation guides for both aspirants and professed.

Vocation Ministry

We have created a small publication for our region, the *Noti-Voluntas Dei*. We have chosen this as a means of providing information to members and to introduce our charism to others. Besides, to draw

vocations we want our members' activities, our spirituality, and the writings of our Founder be known.

We are careful to answer and maintain contact by internet with those interested in our Institute. This, too, is an effective tool for vocation promotion.

Annual Gathering at Quimbaya

We held our annual gathering from July 17 to 20 at Quimbaya, and most of the members attended. It was an enriching experience for personal growth and for team life.

Year of the Priest

On August 3, 2009, the El Santo Cura de Ars residence for priests in Armenia, a Eucharistic celebration took place for the inauguration of the Year of the Priest promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI. Many diocesan priests were present; Father Guillermo Pérez, I.V.D., represented the Institute.

Director General's Visit

Father François Hamel will be making his canonical visitation in our country in February, 2010. Welcome, Father François! Your presence in Colombia is a great joy to us all.

The peace of Christ becomes my own when I accept it as a divine gift.

Fr. Louis-Marie Parent

NEWS FROM DISTRICTS AND REGIONS... (CONTINUED)

United States

Meetings that all the United States Voluntas Dei members are asked to attend are held regularly.

The spring meeting (March 2009) was held in Newark, New Jersey. The guest speaker was Redemptorist Father Daniel Francis.

The summer Congress (August 2009) was held in Paoli, in the suburbs of Philadelphia. The Congress was facilitated by Brother Loughlan Sofield, a Missionary Servant of the Most Blessed Trinity.

The Director General was present at the fall (November 2009) Congress. The first meeting of the new district in formation is now being prepared and will take place during the summer of 2010. The themes retained are: the Statutes, Finances, Spirituality, and Formation.

We wish a good district assembly to our brothers and sisters of the United States.

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Canada 2009

Robert Wychers

Chile 2008

Juan Carlos Borrero Simón

Haiti 2008

Lycius Leclerc

2009

Usnel Deshommes

André Fredo Lesly

Jean Fénel Bourdeau

Sri Lanka 2008

Fernando Eustus S.

Dominican Republic 2009

Elias Severino De Seña

India 2008

Varghese Genardhanan
and Vimala Thankayyan

Jose Ashokan
and Celine Ashokan

Chandran Govindan
and Jayalakshmi Chandran

2009

Antony Sony Panakkal
George Majo Kalathiparambil

Dominican Republic 2008

Juan Fermin Castillo Rosario

Guillermo Carrasco Soriano

Raúl Santos Peña Peguero

Wander Vladimir Polanco Sánchez

NEWS FROM DISTRICTS AND REGIONS... (CONTINUED)

Haiti

Excerpts from a Report of the 2009 Annual Congress

Let us live in Solidarity, let us Establish our District Financially: This was the theme chosen by the district council for the 2009 Congress that took place in Port-au-Prince from April 14 to 16, in the Institute's house of formation.

Father Philippe Désiré, District Director, opened the Congress at the Eucharistic celebration by welcoming everyone present at this gathering that he considers a true moment of formation, reflection, homecoming, and sharing. This opening Mass was presided by Father Yves Sévère.

The Congress theme was developed by a Haitian priest, Father Philippe B. Joseph, a Spiritan Father, founder of Fonkose, a savings and credit cooperative. He is also the initiator of a native religious community. The exercise of solidarity for a financial organisation passes through the creation of riches in the communal sections, and for this it is necessary that the following basic principles be implemented:

1. Non-exclusive organisation
2. Be supported by specialists in development
3. Check the available resources
4. Offer public services
5. Develop a partnership between private and public sectors

During the Congress a working paper was handed out by the district director for study and comments. In order to live in solidarity and financially organise the district, the Congress members believe that it is important to take into account the formation of the district's members.

The Congress had periods of prayer, facilitation, and reflection. At the closing of this fraternal gathering, some of the members present renewed their vows while others began their period of probation at the Eucharistic celebration presided by the district director; Father Madelon gave the homily.

Dominican Republic

The Director General visited the Voluntas Dei members in the Dominican Republic in May, 2009.

He met the members in each sector of the country: Santo Domingo, Miches, Hato Mayor del Rey, and Sabana de la Mar.

The district Congress took place in July at the Juan Pablo II School of Evangelisation. The Congress theme was *The Eucharist and Formation in the Institute*.

India

by *Napoleon Gomez*

The Dawn of a New Era

A new era dawned in the history of the Voluntas Dei Institute in India on March 1st 2009 when Very Rev Fr François Hamel IVDei, the Director General, announced the central council's decision to raise the juridical status of our region into a district in formation. He announced this before a large assembly of priests, nuns and lay people who were participating in the solemn ceremony of priestly ordination of the five deacons of the Institute. Fr Napoleon Gomez, a senior priest in the Institute, was appointed director of the new district in formation.

As I was asked to give an account of the important event in the Institute in the recent past, my first thought was about the 'The Living Together of Voluntas Dei Priests-2009.' Sixteen Voluntas Dei priests gathered together at Bethel, the directorate and formation house of the Institute, and participated throughout the three-day session. The programme was aimed at drawing a road map for the newly erected district in formation.

April 27, 2009 – Introductory Talk

Our Institute is blessed with young priests. They reached Bethel in the afternoon, and started preparing for the evening programme. The programme began in the evening with an hour's adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. The first session began with an introductory talk by Fr Napoleon Gomez, the director, on 'Consecrated Secularity', one of the main themes chosen for the 2010 Assembly General. He enlightened the members by giving a short summary of the basic characteristics of secular consecration and

underlined the need to give authentic witness to this secular consecration through their apostolate and way of life. He compared their living witness in the midst of secular society to that of 'leaven in the dough.' Apart from their apostolate, their very presence in the midst of a secular milieu itself must be a source of sanctification of the society.

April 28, 2009 – Orientation Talk

The Very Rev Msgr. Eugene Pereira, Vicar General of the archdiocese of Trivandrum, ignited the young minds and led them to a soul searching. He inspired the young priests to read the signs of the times and to take up the challenges that are ahead, to carry on our mission especially in a pluralistic society like India and to dream for a better future for the Institute and the Church as a whole. He invited all to take up responsibilities for the further growth of the Institute.

Mission and Vision of the Institute in the Context of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum

As the Institute took its roots in the archdiocese of Trivandrum in Kerala State, the directorate and the minor seminary – Bethel – are also situated in Trivandrum where the presence of the Institute is well-known now. Msgr Nicholas Tartius, the Episcopal Vicar of the Archdiocese praised the members and especially the priests for their dedicated services in the parishes of Trivandrum and different parts of the state. He emphasized the need for contextualizing the mission." We need to go to the people as Jesus did." (Mt 8:1-10), he said. The one who draws the vision for a mission must be

a committed person who could analyse the society, especially the plight of the poor and the needy in society.

The Voluntas Dei Institute in Tamil Nadu

Rev. Frs. Remigius and John Paul Vinod drew a clear picture of the beginning of the growth of the Institute in the different dioceses in the state of Tamil Nadu. Fr. Remigius reminded the participants of the hardships they had to undergo to spread the Institute's presence and apostolate in Tamil Nadu, along with late Rev. Fr. Pancras Christanand. The members realized the importance of having a formation centre for the members of Tamil Nadu for team meetings, formation programmes etc.

April 29, 2009

It was against this background that Fr. James Dunstan Selvaratnam, Asian delegate in the central council, arrived at Bethel to animate the programmes and to facilitate the five different committees on the 3rd and final day of the 'The Living Together.' He urged the members to ask each other 'What do others say that we are' and 'What do we say we are'. He appreciated the 'oneness' he experienced among the members, and exhorted them to carry on with the same spirit of love and brotherhood, and that the Institute counts very much on India to keep on its mission thrust.



At present, the Voluntas Dei priests are working in the archdioceses of Trivandrum, Verapoly and Chennai and in the dioceses of Neyyattinkara, Quilon, Sivagangai and Chingleputt in South India, and the young seminarians are getting trained to take up more missions in North India as well. Keeping this in mind, seven major seminarians are doing their regency in the different dioceses in Assam, in north-east India.

As more and more young priests are getting ordained every year, there are thoughts of sending them to foreign missions, to reach out to people who have not known Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and to developed countries, to help the Institute train priests to carry on the Institute mission at home.

Various Committees

In the presence of Fr. Dunstan, five different committees were formed at the end of the 'Living Together' session. The programme concluded on a positive note, that a get-together for all the members could be arranged once a month, to implement the deliberations of the "Living Together" and to continue in peace and brotherhood among the members. The three-day programme came to an end with the thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration.



Juridic Status

Father François Hamel, Director General of the Voluntas Dei Institute,

Whereas in the last few years, the process aimed at finding a new juridic status that is better suited to the India Region;

Whereas the number of members in India has grown, thanks to a good promotion of vocations;

Whereas the sectors and teams in India have shown much vitality;

Whereas there is hope for further growth;

Whereas there is sufficient capacity for self-management close to German benefactors;

Whereas the India Region, by reaching back to its roots, expects renewed vigour energy in its spiritual life and for living the charism of the Institute;

Whereas the capacity of self-management and presents moral guarantees for the future;

After consultation with the members of the central council of the Voluntas Dei Secular Institute at a meeting November 7-8, 2008 (Resolution CC08-052),

Do hereby decree

THE CANONICAL ERECTION Effective March 01, 2009, of the INDIA DISTRICT-IN-FORMATION

with all the rights and privileges provided in the Constitutions (art. 201-204) of the Voluntas Dei Secular Institute.

Given at Thiruvananthapuram, India
28 February 2009

François Hamel, I.V.Dei
Director General

NEWS FROM DISTRICTS AND REGIONS... (CONTINUED)

Sri Lanka

Excerpts from the 2008-2009 Annual Report

Visit of the Director General

The Sri Lanka district-in-formation was so fortunate to have a fourth visit from the Director General, in February 2009. He visited both minor and major seminaries in Kandy and the Kochchikade house where Christy and Marusiline are there with students.

Web page

In memory of the golden jubilee of the foundation of our Institute, we decided to open a web page for the district. It was prepared by Fr. Dunstan and designed by Mr. Roshan and Mrs Kalista, and was officially opened by Fr. General when he visited Sri Lanka. This web page is in three languages.

The Death of Fr. Parent

The death of our beloved founder Fr. Parent brought sorrow to all the members in Sri Lanka when the message reached us. Two of us attempted to come down for his funeral but the visa was not granted to us on time, as there was civil war in our country. However, we did have a requiem mass in sector level and also in the Seminary in Kandy, for the repose of the soul of Fr. Parent. All the members of the Colombo Sector gathered on the day of the funeral at St. Anne's convent. Fr. Dunstan presided the Eucharist. The seminarians also organized a special Eucharistic celebration on 23rd of May in honour of Fr. Parent, at the seminary at which all were invited to pray for Fr. Parent.

The members of the Mannar Sector under the leadership of Soosaipillai invited the priests and religious of the diocese to the Eucharistic celebration on the 29th of May 2009. In Jaffna, – as

it is the soil where Fr. Parent visited four times and where he founded of the Institute – the special Mass was organised in the formation house.

The Arrest of Tony Jeray

Tony Jeray, a professed layman, was arrested by the military in September, 2008. He is under custody. We have made several steps to get him out of jail, but to no avail. As the civil war is going on, he is kept in jail under the suspicion that he helped the Tamil Tigers. When our General was there, he, too, tried to see him at the jail, but the appeal was rejected by the authorities.

Due to the arrest of Tony Jeray, the priests, seminarians and even a few married couples were called for interrogation and harassed by the criminal branch. Dunstan, being the director of the Institute in Sri Lanka, was often called in for inquiries by the same branch. Dunstan was able to see Tony only twice, but could not speak to him. Now the case is filed in the courts to bring him out, proving that he is not a supporter of the Tamil Tigers and has been a member of the Institute for the last sixteen years.

Civil war

The war has affected our members. Fr. Antony Joseph lost his father for lack of proper medical care. Two brothers of a minor seminarian were killed, and the mother of a married couple died by food poisoning, in the war zone. Besides this, four families of our seminarians and two married couples families are now in the refugee camp.

As almost all our members are Tamils, it is dangerous and risky to move around freely because of the tension that exists in the country.

Ordination

The district is blessed with one more priest this year. Eustus Fernando who has finished his theological studies was ordained a deacon in December, 2008 and priest in April, 2009.

Preparation for the 2010 Assembly General

As requested by the 2010 Assembly General Preparatory Committee, the district arranged seminars for the members at the sector level, instructing them about the four topics, namely consecrated secularity, formation, the vow and commitment of poverty, and the service of authority and obedience. The discussions were made in

teams. The personal questionnaire was given and collected from the members with vows and commitments.

Special mission

The civil war caused many displacements and injuries to the people affected by the attacks in the war zone. The Catholic Conference of Bishops and the Conference of the Major Superiors formed a special committee to help the war victims in the affected areas. Our members also joined in the mission of helping the war-affected people in the refugee camps. Our priests, seminarians and married couples were involved in different types of mission, there.

You can check out website www.voluntasdei.org
The Voluntas Dei members will find there reports of the Director General's recent visits to.

Cuba: January 2009

Laos and Sri Lanka: February 2009

India: March 2009

Dominican Republic: May 2009

Haiti: June 2009



André Côté
Canada



Manuel Cornejo
Chile



Alonso Posada
Colombia



George Hazler
United States



Philippe Désiré
Haiti



**Napoleon Gomez
Gomez**
India

District and Regional Directors



Ramon A. Araujo
Dominican Republic



S. James Dunstan
Sri Lanka

TESTIMONIES

Engineering Peace

*Greg Kremer, layman
United States*

My life as a member of Voluntas Dei has been wonderful, but it had a strange beginning. Pope John Paul II tricked me into my vocation to a Secular Institute. I was in an unsettled time in my life and was searching inside and outside the Catholic Church for answers, when I picked up a book by John Paul II called "Mountaineers of the Spirit" because as an outdoorsman I liked the title and because I had a gift certificate that I needed to use. Little did I know it was a book of prayers and talks promoting secular institutes as part of his call for a "New Evangelization." This new vocational possibility set my heart on fire and left me yearning for this close connection with Christ and humanity that seemed possible through life as a consecrated secular.

I was drawn to the Voluntas Dei Secular Institute by the great website and the Apostolic Objective of "Creating Peace and Brotherhood in Jesus Christ." I was known as the 'computer guy' at the beginning since I came to my first national gathering in March 2004 without ever having met a member of the Institute.

My remote location (in Athens, Ohio which is far from any existing teams) and my familiarity with technology led to the creation of a 'virtual team' to welcome and nurture all inquirers and members who are not geographically close to an existing team. We call it the St. Isidore Team and we meet using a Skype conference call. It is wonderful to be able to share fellowship and formation each month with people around the world, in places like Florida, California, Illinois, Virginia, and even the Dominican Republic and Japan!

Since my journey has been unique, I have taken on the role of formation leader for the 'special cases,' which includes the St. Isidore team as well as those coming from religious orders.

I feel that teaching and administration are two charisms that I have been given, and I put them in practice as an Associate Professor and Chair of the Mechanical Engineering Department at Ohio University and in numerous catechetical roles in my parish and diocese, including youth minister, Adult Faith Formation leader, and Chairman of the Diocesan Catechetical Planning Team.



The Voluntas Dei spirituality infuses all of this work, starting with the fact that I meditate on the mysteries of the rosary as I ride my bike to and from school, and I include daily Mass in my online schedule and schedule my classes and meetings around it.

I have introduced service learning into the Mechanical Engineering Capstone Design Project, partnering student teams with individuals with disabilities within Southeastern Ohio who could benefit from assistive technology devices to help them gain or maintain employment. I am also a faculty co-advisor and participant in an Engineers The Without Borders group from Ohio University that has partnered with a remote village in the Ashanti region of Ghana to implement appropriate technology solutions within the village to improve water quality and education, as requested by the village elders.

I also do research in the Institute for Sustainable Energy and the Environment on projects like "biofuels from algae" and "ammonia-powered vehicles" in an effort to develop alternative energy sources that respect and sustain our earth.

I am able to talk with students about love and character and integrity and human dignity, and I believe that I am helping to "engineer peace" by developing engineers who appreciate their responsibility to "engineer a better world."

I try to witness to the sacredness of all creation by getting most of my food from my garden or the local farmer's market, by conserving energy in my house and using a solar and wind system to produce more electrical power than I use, by leading efforts in the parish and community to use more efficient lighting and appliances, by doing volunteer work on local trails, and as an active member of our parish's Peace and Justice Group.

I am grateful for the opportunity as a celibate layman to build peace by nurturing relationships with men and women, young and old, the powerful and the marginalized,...the many faces of God in our world.

The path of love makes us encounter God.
Fr. Louis-Marie Parent

Dear Voluntas Dei Brothers and Sisters,



Bernarda and I are a Voluntas Dei couple in Chile, members of the team located in La Serena. We have four children: Daniel, Carlos, Pablo and Maria Raquel.

In March, 2009 we celebrated our silver wedding anniversary. This event coincided with our first commitments in the Institute, and this gave a special significance to our gathering. We felt that it was not only a special celebration of our being a couple, but an event that brought us close to all our brothers and sisters in Chile. This wedding anniversary as well as our first commitments stimulated our determination to respond as a couple to God's call to live our consecration in the midst of the world like yeast in dough.

May God bless you all.

***Bernarda et Bernardo Zambra Moreno,
Chile***

*Juan Fermín Castillo, seminarian
Dominican Republic*

I am from Sabana de la Mar in the province of Hato Mayor, Dominican Republic. My parents, Evaristo Castillo and Eugenia Rosario are a Christian couple who educated me in the faith, and I have known Jesus from my earliest years.

After my first communion I became an altar server in my parish. It was at that time that I first heard my vocation call. With the help of Fr. Michel Laroche, I.V.D., I joined a group of youth engaged in vocation discernment. Then in 1996 I entered the minor seminary of Hato Mayor, and in 1999 I was in the major seminary. All of this time was one of apprenticeship, for me, a time of vocation discernment, of testing and of going beyond oneself. I have always been able to count on the grace of God who has always been with me and has graced me with His call.

India's 'Untouchables' are one Priest's Mission

*by Fr. Benjamin Chinnappan
United States*

Having gone through a life of struggle, hardship and poverty from my early childhood, I have begun to take up every opportunity that God gives me to improve my skills and knowledge. My focus was always to move forward despite challenges and obstacles that I faced under the caste system of India. I started my journey from a rural village in India which was very primitive. I grew up in a small hut without basic facilities such as toilet, water and electricity. My family was very large with eight children and food was always in scarcity. I grew up with other families in my village and many were equally starving for food.

Due to lack of jobs and opportunities, many left my village to big cities in search of a better life. I have never seen many of my childhood friends since then. The situation was not very promising but God was very good to me and had a special plan in my life.

I grew up in a rural village called Kakkanour which had a population of five hundred families. The village is located 100 miles south of Chennai and forty miles east of Pondicherry in the state of Tamil Nadu, South India. Like every village, my village was religiously diverse, populated with Christians,

Hindus and Muslims. People of different castes lived together but maintained segregation very strongly. Based on caste, people had different occupation and maintained the difference in every walk of life. Any violation of the caste ethos was severely dealt by the upper caste people.

Even as early as ten years old, I experienced the pain of being segregated in schools. The upper caste children never associated with dalit children and never played with us during the break hours. They would not even eat with us during the lunch hours. The practice of the untouchability was very common and tolerated in public places, schools and churches. I have seen many of my neighbors and their children who worked as bonded laborers in the house of the upper caste for just a minimum pay of ten cents per day.

I was born as a dalit and grew up as an outcaste. Dalits are considered to be outside the caste system in the Hindu religion and they are never included as part of the community. Even after sixty three years of independence, India is still limping with the



apartheid of the caste system. The practice of the untouchability is a national shame that has shunned our growth. No section of our society goes untouched by this virus. Even within the Christian communities where one is supposed to experience love and fellowship, the caste discrimination diminishes the image of the church.

I have personally experienced such rejection and total discrimination within my own archdiocese. I have been always looked down by my fellow upper caste priests and nuns. They wanted to maintain the control and the supremacy over dalits.

Although I am a priest for twenty three years now, it was not easy for me to achieve this target. At the age of fifteen, I joined the diocesan seminary to pursue studies into the priesthood. It was a huge challenge for me as an untouchable to get into the seminary and go through eleven years of formation. Even just before the ordination, I had to go through rough scrutiny although many of my upper caste friends never had these obstacles.

I was ordained as a priest in May 1988 for the archdiocese of Pondicherry-Cuddalore. I was one of the rare individuals who had this privilege to be ordained as priests. It was a great joy for many dalit Christians to see me as a priest. They were used to see either white missionaries or the upper caste clergy as priests. They never had one of them as serving the altar of our Lord. The irony is that most of the Christians in India are dalits and yet they never had any significant role in the life of the church. They were always treated as marginalized, outcaste and outsiders.

As a priest, I had a rough time in mingling with the upper caste clergy and the upper caste Christians. Every time I protested against this unjust discrimination, I was isolated and became their target. I was severely punished by the archdiocese for my stand and option for dalits. I was recognized by the bishop for my education, talents and skills. I worked five years for my diocese in various parishes. They were the memorable days when I

worked with dalits and shared their grief and suffering. Even as a Catholic priest, I lived and continue to live with the stigma of Untouchability.

September 1993 opened a new chapter in my life. I had the privilege and opportunity to come to Canada and join St. Paul University in Ottawa for graduate studies in theology. Symbolically it was a transition from slavery to freedom, from oppression to liberty and from despair to hope. It was a great time to learn more about me and the direction that I need to take to empower my own people who are still under oppression. My entry into Canada gave me a new exposure to a culture that helped me to breathe the fresh air of freedom. God helped me to have a great time in Canada and finish my studies successfully.

In 1996, I moved to New York to pursue studies in Chaplaincy program. It was here I met Fr. Andrew Sioletti, who was my mentor and vocation promotor to the Voluntas Dei Institute. He helped me to achieve national certification in 1998 from the National Association for the Catholic Chaplains. I am thankful for his tremendous support and encouragement. With my credentials, I got a chaplain position at the Holy Spirit Hospital at Camp Hill, PA.

For seven years, I worked for the Sisters of the Christian Charity and learned a great deal from them and the surrounding communities. With their support, I established Dalit Solidarity, Inc. a non-profit and charitable organization to improve the lives of my fellow dalits. Essentially it is a program that empowers the dalits through education, health care and development. Dalit Solidarity, Inc. has been making a great impact in the lives many children and widows. Keenly aware of the critical role of education in the advancement of any oppressed population, I have worked diligently to provide Dalit children with opportunities for a quality education. Dalit Solidarity has sought to provide affordable health care to all Indians, especially the women and children. We opened three clinics for their use in 2004.

Because of God's love and mercy, I feel called to minister to the last, least, and the left out. From 2004 to the present my ministry has been with Veterans at the Hines VA Hospital. The lives of many Veterans reflect my own life, a life broken and wounded. It is through my own brokenness and vulnerability that I am able to connect with their lives, helping them to find meaning and purpose.

My vocation to the priesthood and my discernment to the Voluntas Dei Institute have given me the courage of conviction to work with broken and wounded people who will be considered as the Untouchables. My entry into the Voluntas Dei has brought a new flavor to my ministry and a new direction in my life. The spirituality of the Institute helped me to live out my own gifts in a way that is helpful for my growth and for the well being of my

community. I am thankful for the welcoming spirit of all those associated with the Voluntas Dei, and I have been strengthened by the fellowship – including the virtual fellowship offered by my St Isidore team-mates.

I am most appreciative of being accepted for who I am, for being recognized as an equal among the diverse members (which is still an unusual feeling for me due to my long-time experience of the caste system that still divides my native country), and for being loved. This loving support, along with the spirituality of living in the present moment with no criticism and no complaint, has helped me to grow and to enhance my gifts as I continue to respond to the will of God for my life - helping the poorest and most disadvantaged people in my homeland.



Bloom Where You're Planted

Fr. Léo Grégoire
Canada

One never knows where to begin when it concerns writing about oneself, and this is doubly so when it has to deal with something as mysterious as one's vocation. Still, we all have a story to tell, so I shall try to offer you something in all simplicity.

I am from a Franco-American background. I was born in Woonsocket, Rhode Island into a practising Christian family of 19 children (10 girls and 9 boys). I am the fourth child in the family, and oldest of the boys. At home there was never any question as to whether or not we should go to Mass on Sunday: everyone went. We would pray the rosary every night, and this we did right into the mid fifties, when the family started to disperse. We used to have grace before meals and to go to church during Lent. For a short period of time in 1949 we would walk 3 miles (5 kilometres) to go to church because we had no vehicle.

My father was a convinced Christian and a textile worker; he worked in the textile mills in and around Woonsocket, as well as in Springfield, Massachusetts and Meriden, Connecticut until retirement, when he bought a variety store in Hill, New Hampshire. My parents finally retired for good in Meriden in the 1970s. Father died in 1992, and Mother is still alive despite her 92 years of age.

I have very positive reactions to my parents. Father worked hard, sometimes as many as 20 hours a day, to feed his big family. Mother was busy with raising us kids, standing by the stove, doing the laundry, and sewing into the wee hours of the morning.

Education and intellectual formation have always had pride of place in my parents' lives; both were well educated by the standards of the day, with Dad having a grade 10 education and Mother having graduated from

Hill College Commercial School in Woonsocket. We were all avid readers, at home. Mother would read the St. Anthony Messenger and her French religious magazines (*Celle qui pleure*, *revue Notre-Dame-du-Cap*, *l'Oratoire*). Father would be immersed in his correspondence course in textiles. All of my schooling was in the Woonsocket Catholic schools (Presentation of Mary Sisters, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Religious of Jesus and Mary), and Sacred Heart College and Mt. St Charles Academy, both operated by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

During my studies it was the Brothers of the Sacred Heart who had the greatest influence on me, though none of them was ever my teacher. The first was an “old” brother nearing the age of 60; he would often welcome me in his quarters after school, somewhat like my spiritual counsellor. The other brother was the school librarian: he would guide my reading, especially in French. He was the one who introduced me to Charles de Foucauld and his writings, and to his biography by René Bazin. There were also the Little Sisters of the Assumption who were “nurses to the poor,” who impressed me very much, as well as an aunt who was a Religious of Jesus and Mary. My parents never spoke to me as such about becoming a priest or about the religious life, but they always encouraged my interest in things of the Church, and it seemed as it went without saying that my vocation was directed to the priesthood. I was an altar boy for about two years, a “ministry” I had to give up when we moved too far away from the church we attended. As far as the priests I knew were concerned, not one of them ever showed any interest in me before I went to the Oblates.



I attended the Oblate Fathers' Juniorate in Bar Harbor, Maine in 1955 for a year's preparatory course to upgrade my courses in Latin and French; this was followed by two years of the ordinary Classics curriculum. I entered the Oblate Fathers novitiate in Colebrook, New Hampshire at the end of July, 1958. I returned home in June of 1959 rather than follow the advice of my spiritual director who would have liked to see me join the fledgling *Voluntas Dei* Institute (founded in 1958). At that time, however, I was not too keen on leaving one community for another, but this would happen about a year later, in 1960.

It was with the encouragement of my former novice master that I finally answered the Lord's call by joining the *Voluntas Dei* Institute on September 9, 1960. The Institute was very young. Besides Father Parent our founder, the personnel consisted of a young Oblate Father, a priest from Sherbrooke, and a Slovenian priest. The remainder consisted of the “gang” that we were, well intentioned young men, but without any experience. I quickly realised that the *Voluntas* lifestyle was very different from what I had known till then. At the time, the *Voluntas* Deis would beg for their food at the local farmers markets every Friday evening and Saturday afternoon. This experience was quite traumatizing. The most humiliating of all was that the merchants well knew what we were about when they saw these young men in cassocks with flower-print bags approach, but some seemed to take a secret pleasure waiting for us to ask them verbally for “charity in God's name.”

Following studies in philosophy at Trois-Rivières I spent three years teaching at Roberval and at the seminary in Saint-Victor-de-Beauce, southeast of Québec City. I entered the Institute's St. Joseph the Worker Seminary at Red Rapids, New Brunswick in 1965, for theology. I was ordained to the priesthood in 1969. I also taught for two years in Baie Comeau, Québec's English High School. Then, in 1971, I returned to the Diocese of Edmundston for ministry at Plaster Rock and Red Rapids. Except for approximately six months (I had gone to Baie Comeau while still a deacon), I have spent my entire priesthood in the Diocese of Edmundston. This is why I am very much at ease in speaking about “my diocese” and “my fellow priests of the Edmundston

Diocese.” I have always felt well integrated and welcomed by everyone for as long as I’ve been here. I exercised my ministry at Plaster Rock and Red Rapids, Aroostook, St. Patrick, Tilley, Perth-Andover, Maliseet and Assumption in Grand Falls, and Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs in Edmundston. The apostolate of the faith education of adults has always been one of my main interests, and I am still active with the School of Faith. After a masters degree and a licentiate in canon law at St. Paul University in Ottawa, I was appointed vice-chancellor of the Diocese of Edmundston.

I can explain neither to myself nor to others how it has happened that I am a priest today, why the Lord chose me rather than to so many others who were more deserving than me. To me, this is very much one of the Lord’s secrets. As a child, an aunt who was a nun had told me that if I prayed three Hail Marys at night before going to sleep, I would be a priest one day... It must be true! Anyhow, I still pray my Hail Marys every night, they are part of my daily routine.

I am happy to be a “Voluntas Dei,” I am happy to be a priest, and I am happy to be part of the Edmundston presbyterium. I believe that the greatest gift I have received from my Institute has been to form me in being of service to others. I have been a priest for over 35 years, I often said that parish ministry was not my “bag,” that it was in the field of education that I would have wanted to be. So after all these years I believe that I have learned to “bloom where I’ve been planted.” This, I believe, is the secret, on the path to happiness that the Lord has drawn for us.

Deceased

Matilde ACOSTA

– wife of Salomon Ramirez Mateo, Dominican Republic ~ January 14, 2009

Augustine KATTADY – priest of United States ~ January 24, 2009

Beauvin MATHIEU – priest of Haiti ~ April 27, 2009

Louis-Marie PARENT

– priest of Canada and Founder of the Voluntas Dei Institute ~ May 17, 2009

Sinforoza Del Carmen RODRIGUEZ CHANDIA

– wife of Jose Adrian Dominguez Aguilera, Chile ~ May 19, 2009

Maurice CADORET – priest of Canada ~ June 2, 2009

Ponnammah JOHNPILLAI – wife of Joseph Johnpillai, Sri Lanka ~ August 10, 2009

Rosner POLYCARPE – husband of Rona Mystal, Haiti ~ October 10, 2009

Ordinations - Priesthood



Bergson Julien
and Iradin Louis



Jones Cletus



Joosa
Denson



Fernando
Eustus



Arogyaswamy
Xavier
Ignacimuthu

Haiti

Bergson Julien
Iradin Louis

June 27, 2009
June 27, 2009

India

Rajan Sony Nelluvila
Arogyaswamy Xavier Ignacimuthu
Thekkekalathum Shymon
Martin Jeremias
Jones Cletus
George Majo Kalathiparambil
Antony Sony Panakkal
Joosa Denson

March 1, 2009
March 1, 2009
March 1, 2009
March 1, 2009
March 1, 2009
December 29, 2009
December 29, 2009
December 29, 2009

Dominican Republic

Guillermo Carrasco Soriano
Wander Vladimir Polanco Sánchez
Raúl Santos Peña Peguero
Juan Fermín Castillo Rosario
Elías Severino de Seña

May 30, 2009
May 30, 2009
December 5, 2009
December 5, 2009
December 5, 2009

Sri Lanka

Fernando Eustus

April 25, 2009



Wander Vladimir Polanco Sánchez
Elías Severino de Seña
Juan Fermín Castillo Rosario
Raúl Santos Peña Peguero
Guillermo Carrasco Soriano



Thekkekalathum
Shymon



Antony Sony
Panakkal



Martin
Jeremias



George Majo
Kalathiparambil



Rajan Sony
Nelluvila